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DAILY UPDATE FOR CABINET AFFAIRS 10-26-17.docx

## **DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR DAILY UPDATE FOR CABINET AFFAIRS – 10/26/17**

Lori Mashburn, White House Liaison  
Natalie Davis, Special Assistant to the Secretary

### **STATUS OF THE SECRETARY**

**TODAY:**

10/26 DC Meeting with Danish Minister for Energy, Utilities, and Climate, Mr. Lars Christian

- Meeting with Chairman Lamar Smith (TX)
- Remarks at American Heroes Roundtable with Hunting and Fishing Access for Veterans
- Meeting at White House on Opioids
- Meeting with Tom Hutchison

10/27 DC Call with Governor Mary Fallin (OK)

- Meeting with the President
- Meeting with Administrator Neomi Rao

### **STATUS OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY**

**TODAY:** The Deputy Secretary is in DC conducting internal meetings

### **OF NOTE**

**BLM RESCINDS OBAMA GHG GUIDANCE FOR ENERGY PROJECTS:** The Interior's Bureau of Land Management today officially rescinded its Obama-era instructions to consider climate change and greenhouse gas emissions before

approving energy projects. In a memorandum posted today, BLM Acting Director Mike Nedd said the agency "will no longer apply the provisions" BLM issued in the last days of the Obama administration that would have made the agency weigh the potential for increasing greenhouse gas emissions in National Environmental Policy Act reviews of energy development and production projects. President Donald Trump in March revoked the Obama administration's Council on Environmental Quality's guidance that directed agencies to consider emissions and climate change in all NEPA reviews.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR RELEASES ENERGY BURDENS REPORT

*Outlines Trump Administration's bold approach to achieving American energy dominance*

**WASHINGTON** Today, the U.S. Department of the Interior released the "Review of the Department of the Interior Actions that Potentially Burden Domestic Energy" report which was produced in response to Executive Order 13783. The report identified agency actions that potentially burden the development or use of domestically produced energy resources, with particular attention to oil, natural gas, coal, and nuclear energy resources. Interior oversees America's oil, gas, coal, hydropower, and renewable energy resources produced on federal lands and waters, which account for almost one-fifth of the Nation's energy and generate on average \$10 billion per year in annual revenue. Today, Secretary Zinke also signed Secretarial Order 3358, that will establish the Executive Committee for Expedited Permitting.

"Developing our energy resources to grow our economy and protecting the environment are not mutually exclusive. However, while conducting the review outlined in the Executive Order, we found that several costly and burdensome regulations from the past threaten that balance by hampering the production or transmission of our domestic energy," **said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke**. "Our public lands are meant to be managed for the benefit of the people. That means a multiple-use approach where appropriate and making sure that multiple-use includes energy development under reasonable regulations. Following President Trump's leadership, Interior is fostering domestic energy production by streamlining permitting and revising and repealing Obama-era job killing regulations all while doing so in an environmentally responsible way."

"The federal government can and must be a better business partner," **Vincent DeVito, Counselor to the Secretary for Energy Policy, said**. "Secretary Zinke's bold approach to achieving American energy dominance is making our nation freer, more secure, and more prosperous. Regulations should not unnecessarily burden energy production, but that is what occurs in many cases. The recent actions outlined in this energy report show how Interior is rolling back some of these burdensome regulations that add little or no value, while promoting responsible energy development."

The report identified a number of burdens that specifically impede the production and

transportation of energy resources, including, but not limited to:

- **Obama-Era 5-Year Program** Under the last Administration, 94% of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) was put off-limits from leasing, having an adverse effect on jobs and energy dominance, while drastically reducing access to future revenue.
  - o Trump Administration Action: Secretarial Order 3350, America-First Offshore Energy Strategy started the process of developing a new 5-Year Program to responsibly develop the OCS and generate much-needed revenue.
- **Federal Coal Leasing Moratorium (Secretarial Order 3338, Discretionary Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement to Modernize the Federal Coal Program)** Nearly 40% of our nation's coal comes from public lands. The 2016 coal moratorium undermines American energy security, inhibits job creation, and reduces revenues to state and local governments.
  - o Action: Secretarial Order 3348, Concerning the Federal Coal Moratorium repealed the Obama-era moratorium on new federal coal leases.
- **Hydraulic Fracturing on Federal and Indian Lands Rule** The compliance costs of the existing 2015 rule on hydraulic fracturing are not justified. All 32 states with federal oil and gas leases and some tribes currently have laws or regulations that address hydraulic fracturing operations.
  - o Action: Secretarial Order 3349: American Energy Independence put the rule under review. The BLM published a rulemaking to rescind the rule on July 25th.
- **Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation AKA the Venting and Flaring Rule** The rule imposes a substantial burden on industry, especially for marginal well production in energy-rich states like New Mexico, particularly the requirements that are set to become effective on January 17, 2018.
  - o Action: Secretarial Order 3349: American Energy Independence put the rules under review for subsequent action by the Department. On October 5, 2017, the BLM issued a proposed rule to temporarily suspend certain requirements of the rule. The BLM is also actively reviewing the underlying regulation for potential revision.
- **Unnecessarily lengthy NEPA reviews delay projects** The NEPA process has added extra time and analysis to project completion, which adds to uncertainty for industry and higher costs for taxpayers. This is particularly true for Departmental actions that impact energy and infrastructure projects, such as resource management planning, permitting, and issuance of rights-of-way for pipeline projects and electricity transmission.
  - o Actions: The Department has identified a number of rules and regulations to revise or rescind such as the Master Leasing Plans, the

NEPA Compliance for Oil and Gas Lease Reinstatement Petitions, and the Sage-Grouse Resource Management Plans. In addition, the Deputy Secretary issued an August memo setting a deadline of one year and limiting EIS statements to 150 pages or 300 pages for unusually complex projects.

- **Holding energy producers hostage via Compensatory Mitigation (Secretarial Order 3330)** Current compensatory mitigation policies have reduced predictability, created conflicts, and unnecessarily increased permitting/authorization timelines. Additionally, industry stakeholders believe the mitigation planning goal exceeds statutory authority. Currently, Interior and its bureaus lack a consistent terminology and framework for mitigation.

- o Action: Secretarial Order 3349: American Energy

Independence reexamined the use of mitigation policies and practices in order to better balance conservation strategies and job creation. Bureaus at the Interior will review various handbooks and manuals on the use of mitigation for energy and infrastructure projects.

- **Systematic delays in the leasing program and permitting process** The long period from when acreage is first nominated to when those acres are offered at a lease sale, as well as delays between the lease sale date and when leases are awarded reduces industry certainty and hinders states from receiving their share of lease sale revenues. These delays have rendered industry less able to plan for and execute exploration and production strategies in a timely fashion, and less able to respond effectively to changing market conditions.

- o Action: Secretarial Order 3354 Supporting and Improving the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Program and Federal Solid Mineral Leasing Program. Secretarial Order 3358 to form a permit expediting committee. In January 2017 there were 92 vacancies in key positions related to the permitting process. Since that time this administration has filled nearly half of those positions. The BLM is also modernizing the software used to track and coordinate permitting while seeking to add regional teams that will be able to greatly streamline the permitting process. So far this year the BLM has decreased their processing time for APDs by an average of 46 days.

- **Endangered Species Act** The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is taken into consideration for both on- and offshore energy and infrastructure projects. It has far-reaching negative impacts on energy production and transmission as well as on critical infrastructure projects. ESA abuses have led to increased costs and delays on projects.

- o Action: Secretarial Order 3353: Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States Work with the Western Governors Association and other local partners to develop recommendations to improve the application of the ESA. Launch a review of ESA regulations and policy documents regarding outdated, unnecessary, ineffective, and inconsistently aligned with Executive and Secretarial Orders.

The report also detailed extensive action taken to advance American Energy Dominance at the Department of the Interior, including, but not limited to:

- Secretarial Order 3351: Strengthening the Department of the Interior's Energy Portfolio
- Secretarial Order 3352: National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska
- Secretarial Order 3353: Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States
- Reestablishing the Royalty Policy Committee to ensure the public continues to receive the full value of energy produced on federal lands.
- Review, repeal, and rewriting of the following rules: the BSEE Well Control and BOP Rules, the ONRR Valuation Rule, and the OSMRE Stream Protection Rule.

## **ZINKE CHEERS PRESIDENT TRUMP'S NOMINATION OF STEVEN GARDNER FOR INTERIOR POST**

**WASHINGTON** Today, President Donald J. Trump announced the nomination of Steven Gardner to be the Director of the office of Surface Mining, Reclamation & Enforcement (OSMRE) at the U.S. Department of the Interior. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke hailed Gardner's nomination.

"When confirmed, Steve will be an unbelievable asset to coal country and the entire team at the Department of the Interior," **said Secretary Ryan Zinke**. "Steve is highly regarded in the mining industry for his extensive experience and insight. Steve will help Interior take the proper steps forward to ensure American Energy dominance is achieved, while also being a responsible steward of American lands. We very much look forward to a quick confirmation process."

"I am beyond humbled and honored to be nominated by President Trump for the Director of OSMRE," **said Steven Gardner**. "My whole life, I have been involved with mining on multiple levels, and I understand the importance of these issues to the communities we serve. I pledge to work every day on behalf of the men and women across this country who look to the OSMRE office as a partner in bettering life for all people on mining lands."

Steve Gardner is currently serving as the President and CEO of ECSI, LLC, a consulting practice where he focused on natural resources, mining, reclamation, energy, environmental, health and safety issues. As a Licensed Professional Engineer, Gardner has worked on projects throughout the US and internationally. Gardner was the 2015 President of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration (SME) and is recognized as a Distinguished Member.

"I applaud President Donald Trump for picking Steve Gardner of Kentucky to lead the

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE)," **said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.** "Steve will be a strong leader and I look forward to the U.S. Senate considering his nomination."

"Having Kentuckian Steve Gardner lead the Office of Surface Mining will be a welcome relief to Kentucky and the nation," **said Senator Rand Paul.** "The last administration's OSM ignored science and economics when it worked to put an end to Kentucky coal mining with an overreaching rule on waterways near coal mines. With Mr. Gardner's background in mining, I am confident that this administration's OSM will ease up eight years of executive overreach and finally allow Kentucky coal to compete again in our nation's all of the above energy policy."

"I applaud the Trump Administration for selecting J. Steven Gardner of Lexington, Kentucky as the Director of the U.S. Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement," **said Congressman Andy Barr.** "I have known Steve for many years and I was proud to recommend him for this important nomination. As a well-respected leader in the mining industry with vast experience and knowledge, I am confident Steve will make an outstanding Director of OSM."

"America's mining industry welcomes Steve Gardner's nomination to become the next director of OSMRE," **said Hal Quinn, the CEO of the National Mining Association.** "A Kentucky native, Mr. Gardner has had a distinguished career as CEO of a prominent mining engineering firm with 40 years' experience in mining, engineering, reclamation, environmental, health and safety matters. He is held in high regard by his professional peers having been elected President of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration (SME), a professional society with over 13,000 members in 100 countries representing scientists, engineers and professionals serving the minerals and mining industries."

Greg Conrad, Executive Director of the Interstate Mining Compact Commission, also expressed his personal support for Steve Gardner noting his outstanding credentials and his knowledge of the intricacies of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, in particular the importance of state primacy under the Act as well as the state/federal relationship envisioned by the Act.

Mr. Gardner has an MS in Mining Engineering with a Graduate Certification in Environmental Systems and a BS in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Kentucky. In 2011, he was inducted into the College of Engineering Hall of Distinction. He has previously served on the University of Kentucky Mining Engineering Foundation, Kentucky Geological Survey, Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering Advisory Boards, and was a member of the Kentucky Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors.

The Bureau of OSMRE is responsible for establishing a nationwide program to protect society and the environment from the adverse effects of surface coal mining operations, under which OSMRE is charged with balancing the nation's need for continued domestic coal production with protection of the environment. Although a

small bureau, OSMRE has achieved big results by working closely with those closest to the problem: the States, Tribes, local groups, the coal industry and communities.

**WH COMMS REPORT** (submitted Wednesday, 10/25)

**Press Inquiries:**

- Small inquiries and logistical inquiries.
- **\*\*Multiple Inquiries\*\* (Whitefish Energy Company) --REQUEST--** Would someone from Secretary Zinke's office call me to discuss Whitefish Energy. Here are my questions: 1) Did Sec. Zinke play any role in securing the contract for Whitefish Energy to work in Puerto Rico? 2) Does Sec. Zinke know the company's chief executive, Andy Techmanski? 3) The Washington Post reported that one of Sec. Zinke's sons once worked a summer job at one of the company's construction sites. Is that correct? Also, confirming this statement provided to the Post: "The Secretary always politely listens when citizens and the small business community approach him with concerns and ideas. Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company."—**RESPONSE--** On background, Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company. The Zinkes and the Techmanskis know each other because they both live in a small town (population 6,000) where everyone knows everyone and his son joined a friend who worked a summer job at one of their construction sites.
- **\*\*Multiple Inquiries\*\* (Strategic Plan leak) —REQUEST--** I noticed today that a [link](#) to a Jan. 12 memo directing BLM's consideration of greenhouse gas emissions and the effects of climate change in NEPA reviews is now broken. Is this a temporary or permanent removal? It is a relocation of the memo? Any information you can offer would be greatly appreciated. Is BLM moving closer to announcing the changes it has in store for planning and NEPA procedures?—**RESPONSE—**The administration does not comment on leaked memos.
- **\*\*Multiple Inquiries\*\*: —REQUEST--** Following up on the AP story saying admin does not support delta tunnels in California. Would love to confirm and talk with someone?—**RESPONSE--** "While the Department of the Interior shares the goals of the state of California to deliver water with more certainty, eliminating risks to the California water supply, and improving the environment, at this time, the Department under the current state proposal does not expect to participate in the construction or funding of the CA Water Fix. The Department and Reclamation will continue to work with the state and stakeholders as the project is further developed."
- **Politico: (Esther Whieldon) —REQUEST--** What topic(s) are Zinke and Trump meeting on this Friday? And any sense of timing on a final WH decision/announcement on monuments? Is there anything you can tell us on what the meeting is about so we can give some insight in our morning newsletter?—**RESPONSE--**The Department doesn't discuss meetings that may or

may not be held with the President of the United States.

### **Top Stories**

- **Washington Examiner:** [Sierra Club begins stirring up trouble for Ryan Zinke over Whitefish's Puerto Rico power contract](#)
- **CNN:** [You may have to pay \\$70 to visit the Grand Canyon and 16 other national parks](#)
- **Salt Lake Tribune:** [Majority of Utahns favors trimming Bears Ears, but most oppose breaking up Grand Staircase, poll says](#)
- **E&E News:** [Email release aims to thwart sage grouse collusion claims](#)
- **Denver Post:** [Lawmakers seek probe of \\$300 million power contract awarded to small company based in Zinke's hometown](#)
- **THE HILL-Opinion:** [Western voices are ignored in Zinke's Interior Department](#)

### **Top Issues and Accomplishments**

- Interior continues to support all Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Maria, and Hurricane Nate efforts. All bureaus are executing their emergency plans and assisting in Hurricane relief.
- Today, Interior announced our Energy Burdens Report on regulation roll-back. The press release can be seen [HERE](#).
- Today, Interior and the Bureau of Land Management announced an oil and gas lease sale in Alaska at the National Petroleum Reserve. The release can be seen [HERE](#).
- Tomorrow, Interior will host a "Hunting and Fishing Access for Veterans" Round Table Meeting to improve coordination with and services for veterans. The event will be covered by press.
- Friday, the Secretary will meet with POTUS.
- Next week, Secretary Zinke is out on personal leave.

### **AGENCY MEDIA (UPDATED)**

**WEEK AHEAD October 18 thru October 26, 2017 (Submitted 10/18)**

### **U.S. Department of the Interior**

*Secretarial-level Announcements/Events/Interviews*

- Secretary Zine will be on personal leave next week (Oct. 31-Nov. 3).
- The Secretary will be meeting with Danish Minister for Energy, Utilities, and Climate, Mr. Lars Christian. Possible MOU signing. Media TBD.
- Secretary Zinke will participate in a Roundtable focused on Veterans' Access to public lands. Selected press invited.
- Friday, Secretary Zinke has a call with Governor Mary Fallin (OK).
- Friday, Secretary Zinke is meeting with the President. Closed press.
- Next week we plan to announce 2 new FACA boards, one related to sportsmen and one related to public/private partnerships.

### **Interior Social Media Updates**

- **October 27: Department-level video:** DOI will release a video celebrating President Theodore Roosevelt's birthday and his conservation legacy.
- **November 1: Department-level blog post:** DOI will publish a blog post for Native American Heritage Month and highlighting the Department's work.

### **National Park Service**

- **October 26: Local NPS Release:** NPS will announce the new superintendent of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
- **October 26: Local NPS Release:** Zion National Park plans to release a Finding of No Significant Impact for a project to manage desert bighorn sheep (DBHS) within the park. Zion has been partnering with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources throughout the process, and will continue to do so during implementation.
- **October 30: Local NPS Release:** Rock Creek Park will close the Old Stone House in Georgetown for approximately 1 year for fire suppression and rehabilitation work. The house and bookstore will remain open through Sunday October 29 with modified hours. Historic furniture and items have been removed from the house in preparation for the rehabilitation project.
- **October 31: Local NPS Release:** Glacier National Park will notify the public of the availability of the park's Lake McDonald Properties Management Plan Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA will be available for a 30-day public review and comment period. Following the public review and comment period, the park will prepare a formal decision document. The EA analyzes alternatives to manage NPS-owned properties surrounding Lake McDonald, which includes buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **November 2: Local NPS Release:** A ceremonial groundbreaking is scheduled for the Eisenhower Memorial, which will be administered by National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA). Final approvals have been granted by the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts. NAMA anticipates issuing a construction permit in late October, with completion tentatively scheduled for May 2020.

- **November TBD: National NPS Release:** Major announcement regarding Arlington Memorial Bridge.

#### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

- **October 26 (tent.): National FWS Release:** FWS will issue a news release regarding the opening of the public comment period for the Mitigation Policy and Endangered Species Act Compensatory Mitigation Policy. The portions FWS will request comment on include the policies' reference to a mitigation planning goal of net conservation gain and the policies' references to the previous Administration's mitigation directives.
- **October 26 (tent.): National FWS Release:** FWS will issue a release on the opening of the public comment for both the Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA) policy and the corresponding regulations. These notices will solicit public comments on the 2016 revised policy and regulations to determine if there are additional revisions, particularly to the CCAA standard, that will make the policy and regulations easier to implement for those entities choosing to participate in a CCAA.
- **October TBD: National FWS Release:** FWS will announce the 2017-18 Refuge-Specific Hunting and Sport Fishing Regulations. Final rule will open various national wildlife refuges to hunting and/or sport fishing for the first time (new hunts) and expand hunting and fishing opportunities at others.
- **October TBD: FWS News Bulletin:** FWS will issue a news bulletin regarding a NEPA Environmental Assessment related to lethal take permits for cormorants for aquaculture facilities.

#### **Bureau of Land Management**

- **October 25 (tent.): Local BLM Release:** BLM-NV will announce the results of a competitive geothermal lease sale for 20 parcels, located in the Battle Mountain, Carson City, Elko and Winnemucca districts, containing 38,208.46 acres for geothermal leasing. This will be the first online geothermal lease sale for Nevada.
- **October 26: Local BLM Release:** BLM-AK will announce that an oil and gas lease sale will take place in December for 900 tracts covering 10.3 million acres in the NPR-A. This lease sale, the 13th since 1999, will be the first NPR-A oil and gas lease sale to occur via livestream video. This is the first time that all available tracts will be offered for lease.
- **October 26:** BLM-AK Acting State Director Karen Mouritsen will attend the Alaska Mapping Executive Committee meeting at the U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Science Center, in Anchorage.
- **October 26:** BLM-WY Cody Field Office will host a public meeting in Shell, Wyoming, in support of the 45-day scoping period for the Leavitt Reservoir Expansion Project Environmental Impact Statement.
- **October 26:** BLM-WY Casper Field Office will hold a public meeting about

tribal consultation for oil and gas permits in Converse County, Wyoming.

- **October 27 (tent.): National BLM Release:** BLM will issue a release announcing that Sabinoso Wilderness Area is now open to the public.
- **November 1–2:** BLM-MT will host a tribal consultation meeting at the Montana/Dakotas State Office in Billings to discuss tribal issues and matters of interest related to the Denbury Resources, Inc. CO2 Pipeline and Enhanced Recovery Project (in southeast Montana); the BNI Coal Ltd. expansion proposal, "BNI-2" (in western North Dakota); and various fire fuels reduction projects in eastern Montana. Tribal Council Presidents/Chairs and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers from 17 tribes have been invited to the meeting.
- **November 2:** Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval will dedicate a section of Highway 140 in memory of BLM firefighters Will Hawkins and Jacob O'Malley, who were killed in a vehicle accident.
- **November 2 – 16:** Scoping meetings for the Notice of Intent to amend Greater sage-grouse land use plans will be held in the following Western cities and towns:
  - o Nov. 2: Twin Falls, ID
  - o Nov. 6: Cheyenne, WY; Idaho Falls, ID
  - o Nov. 7: Marsing, ID; Reno, NV; Burns, OR
  - o Nov. 8: Pinedale, WY; Elko, NV; Billings, MT, Craig, CO
  - o Nov. 9: Ely, NV
  - o Nov. 14: Vernal, UT
  - o Nov. 15: Cedar City, UT
  - o Nov. 16: Salt Lake City, UT
- **November TBD: Local BLM Release:** BLM-CO expects to issue a decision about whether to grant a royalty rate reduction for the West Elk Mine. The BLM proposes to approve Mountain Coal Company, LLC's application for a royalty rate reduction from 8 percent to 5 percent for 10.3 million tons of coal in the West Elk Mine in southwest Colorado's North Fork Valley.
- **November TBD: Local BLM Release:** BLM-CO expects to issue a decision whether to modify GCC Energy's King II Mine in Montezuma County in southwest CO by 951 acres to allow GCC to access an estimated 4.66 million tons of recoverable Federal coal reserves for an additional 6.5 years of mining.

#### U.S. Geological Survey

- **October 30 (tent.): Local USGS Release:** USGS will issue a release regarding a new USGS study that tracks millions of tons of rocks, gravel and silt carried by the Sauk River and its tributaries to the Skagit River.

#### Bureau of Reclamation

- **October 26 - November 1:** A six-member team from the Bureau of Reclamation will visit Taipei, Taiwan, to participate in the 30th anniversary meeting between Reclamation and Taiwan's Water Resources Agency. Reclamation serves as the designated technical representative of the American Institute in Taiwan, the official arm of the U.S. Department of State in Taiwan.

- **October 30:** Status Hearing on Columbia River System Operations EIS (OR). In Portland, Oregon, Federal District Court Judge Michael Simon will receive updates to the status report as part of ongoing litigation. The status conference hearing is scheduled for November 28. Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have four remaining years to complete the court-ordered EIS.

#### **Bureau of Ocean Energy Management:**

- **October/November TBD: BOEM Note to Stakeholders:** BOEM issue a note to stakeholders regarding Q3 FY17 study reports posting to ESPIS.
- **Nov TBD: BOEM Note to Stakeholders:** BOEM will issue a note to stakeholders on the path forward for future renewable energy leasing offshore the Atlantic Coast Request for Feedback (RFF).

#### **Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement**

- **October 27:** BSEE will issue a readout of Director Angelle's engagements in the Gulf of Mexico.

#### **Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement**

- **October 30: National OSMRE Release:** OSMRE will announce the winners of its 2017 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards. The awards are presented in partnership with the National Mining Association and will be formally presented on Nov. 6, 2017 in Wash, D.C.

#### **POLITICAL APPOINTEE UPDATE**

DOI politicals on board = 61

3 PAS confirmed as of 9/18.

5 nominated awaiting confirmation:

- Pending Senate floor vote: Susan Combs, Assistant Secretary Policy Management and Budget.
- Pending Senate floor vote: Brenda Berman, Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation.
- Pending Senate floor vote: Joe Balash, Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals
- Pending Senate floor vote: Ryan Douglas Nelson, Solicitor
- Pending Hearing: Tara Sweeney, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs

Overall:

- Schedule C: 34 of 68 onboard; 2 starting; 6 in process
- NC-SES: 24 of 44 onboard; 4 starting; 1 in process

PAS: 3 Confirmed; 5 Announced; 14 of 17 Submitted to PPO

**SECRETARY SPEAKING INVITATIONS (Updates in Bold)**

Accepted:

**10/26- Hunting and Fishing Access for Veterans Roundtable (DC)**

**11/6 - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Board of Directors Reception (DC)**

**11/7 - DOI Veterans Day Ceremony (DC)**

**11/8 – National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Board of Directors Meeting (DC)**

**11/9 – National WWI Memorial at Pershing Park (DC)**

**11/10 – Tour of Manassas National Battlefield Park**

**11/11 - Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (DC)**

**11/11 - 64th Annual Veterans Day National Ceremony (DC)**

**11/ 11 - Veterans Day Observance at World War II Memorial (DC)**

**Open (date TBC)- Americans for Tax Reform (DC)**

**Open (date TBC)- Detroit Economic Club**

**Event Postponed by organizers due to fire - 10/21 DEPA BOD Meeting (CA)**

**Outstanding Invitations in Process:**

**10/28 Remarks at Washington International Horse Show DC)**

**10/29 Friends of Theodore Roosevelt Island (DC)**

**11/15 Motorcycle Industry Council Symposium (Carson, CA)**

**12/1-2 – Western Governors Association Annual Meeting (Phoenix, AZ)**

**12/9 – Western Caucus Foundation Winter Policy Meeting (Las Vegas, NV)**

**Declining**

- 10/17 Folsom Dam Joint Federal Project Completion Ceremony (Folsom, CA)
- 10/17 National Association of Sporting Goods Wholesalers (San Antonio, TX)
- 10/18 - Environmental Law Institute (ELI) 2017 Award Dinner (DC)
- 10/19 USO Gala (Washington, DC)
- 10/19 Grand Junction Petroleum and Mining Club (Grand Junction, CO)
- 10/20 - TXOGA Lone Star Energy Forum (Woodlands, TX)
- 10/26 - Montana Chamber Annual Meeting (Great Falls, MT)
- 10/28 Cattle Producers of Washington Annual Meeting (Airway Heights, WA)
- 10/30-11/3 International Mining and Resources Conference (Melbourne, Australia)
- 10/30 – Interstate Mining Compact Commission Mid-Year Meeting (DC)**
- 10/31 - George B. Hartzog, Jr. Awards and Speaker Program Clemson University (SC)
- 11/1 - 2017 SHIFT (Shaping How we Invest For Tomorrow) Festival (Jackson Hole, WY)
- 11/4 Governor Reynolds Annual Pheasant Hunt
- 11/8 WY Governor Annual Business Forum (Cheyenne, WY)
- 11/7-9 National Ranger Council Annual Meeting (Gettysburg, PA)
- 11/9 - America First Energy Conference hosted by Heartland Institute (Houston, TX)
- 11/9 - Bass Fishing Hall of Fame Induction Dinner at the Wonders of Wildlife (Springfield, MO)
- 11/13 Montana Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting (Billings, MT)**
- 11/14 George Rogers Clark National Historical Park Quarter Launch (Vincennes, Indiana)
- 11/29 Association of California Water Agencies 2017 Fall Conference and Exhibition (Anaheim, CA)**
- 12/5-7 America Outdoors Association's 29th Annual Marketing and Management Conference for Outfitters and Adventure Resorts (Reno, NV)**
- 12/6 American Exploration and Mining Association Annual Meeting (Reno, NV)**

**12/8 - Valley Industry and Commerce Association Annual Meeting (Los Angeles, CA)**

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (new)**

**Port Aransas, Texas Fatal Barge Fire and Oil Spill:**

Response operations continue in Port Aransas, Texas, following the fatal barge [REDACTED] explosion and oil discharge. As of October 24, there has been no additional release of oil. The barge was transported through the channel and into a mooring location [REDACTED] yesterday, which will ensure safe offload of remaining product contained in the cargo tanks. OEPC reports that multiple shorebirds have been observed with light to moderate oiling; however, none of the birds have been exposed to the amount of oil that would require recovery and rehabilitation. Wildlife crews are continuing to monitor the situation. [REDACTED]

Beach assessment and cleanup operations were ongoing yesterday at Padre Island National Seashore, where two teams of 40 personnel removed 14 cubic yards of oily solids. [REDACTED]

**Hurricane Response/Recovery:**

The Department of Homeland Security reports that, in Puerto Rico, power has been restored to approximately 25 (+1)-percent of customers and the expectation is that 95-percent of Puerto Rico will be restored by December 15. Potable water has been [REDACTED] restored to more than 74 (+1)-percent of clients served by the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority. Telecommunications officials estimate 87 (no change)-percent of the population lives in areas where wireless voice and text service has been [REDACTED] restored. Water levels at the Guajataca Dam are seven feet below the spillway and evacuations will be lifted when the water drops another seven feet. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, grid power has been restored for 30 (no change)-percent of the population on St. Thomas, 2.9 (no change)-percent on St. Croix, and efforts on St. John are expected to begin in two to three weeks. The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority estimates 90-percent of the power will be restored by November 23. In total, there are over 20,000 federal personnel that are directly supporting recovery operations in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. [REDACTED]

**OUTSIDE MEDIA OF INTEREST (new)**

**U.S. Offers Record Lease Sale In Alaska Reserve To Oil, Gas Drillers.**

Reuters (10/25, Gardner) reports the Interior Department is planning to hold a lease sale on December 6 for 900 tracts in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. The Alaska Dispatch News(10/25, DeMarban) reports the tracts contain 10.3 million acres, about half of the total reserve. The BLM said the size of the offering is the largest ever. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said, "(The) unprecedented sale in Alaska will help achieve our goal of American energy dominance."

### **No Mention Of Climate Change In Interior's Draft Strategic Plan.**

The Hill (10/25, Cama) reports a “draft version” of the five-year strategic plan for the Interior Department “does not mention anything about climate change, including whether the agency plans to fight it or how it will adapt.” The draft “focuses heavily on plans to produce more fossil fuels and other forms of energy on public lands and the nation’s outer continental shelf.”

### **Nancy Pelosi Demands Probe Into Montana Firm’s ‘Highly Suspect’ Contract To Repair Puerto Rico.**

The Washington Examiner (10/25, Siegel) reports House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi yesterday “demanded an investigation into how a small Montana-based firm with ties to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke struck a \$300 million deal to repair Puerto Rico’s shattered electricity grid.” Whitefish Energy agreed to a \$300 million contract with PREPA “to rebuild 100 miles of power infrastructure across the island.” In a statement Pelosi said, “All Americans should be concerned about the highly suspect Whitefish contract and the circumstances under which it was negotiated. ... Democrats demand Congress and the appropriate Inspectors General exercise their oversight role to get to the bottom of this suspicious agreement and hold this administration accountable for its dangerous lack of transparency in spending taxpayer money.” The Washington Examiner (10/25, Siciliano) reports the Sierra Club also is “calling for probes of the contract in both the Senate and the House.”

### **New Attitude, New Hope For Struggling Energy Industry.**

The Lafayette (LA) Daily Advertiser (10/25, Stickney) reports that Randal Luthi, president of the National Ocean Industries Association, “told a 2017 Louisiana Gulf Coast Oil and Gas Exposition audience Wednesday that the Trump administration has made important appointments and taken decisive, needed steps to reverse the perceived bias in Washington against fossil fuels.” According to Luthi, “Trump appointments like Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Bureau of Safety and Environment Enforcement Director Scott Angelle of Breaux Bridge, who spoke to LAGCOE on Tuesday, are working with the energy industry, not fighting it.” He said, “Personnel is policy.”

### **Power Restoration Moves Forward In US Virgin Islands.**

Caribbean News Now! (10/24) reports that “about a third of the power on the island of St Thomas has been restored, US Virgin Islands Governor Kenneth Mapp said on Monday.” Mapp told reporters “that the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) reports that St Thomas had 32 percent of its power restored while 15 percent of electricity has been restored in St Croix.” Mapp “expects Cruz Bay, St John to be energized by Wednesday, which will bring power restoration on that island up to 25 percent.”

**Alaska Dispatch News: For the first time, all available tracts in Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve are up for lease**

The Trump administration said Wednesday that it is offering a record 900 tracts for an upcoming lease sale within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, a region that has attracted renewed interest from the oil industry and geologists. At 10.3 million acres, the tracts being offered for the lease sale in December represent about half of the 22.8-million-acre reserve. The Bureau of Land Management said Wednesday the number of tracts to be auctioned for lease is the largest ever. "(The) unprecedented sale in Alaska will help achieve our goal of American energy dominance," said U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, adding that he had pledged to help fill the trans-Alaska pipeline during a visit to see the line and Alaska fields in May. The 800-mile pipeline connecting North Slope fields with a southern Alaska port moves more than 500,000 barrels daily, about one-fourth of the peak shipped in the late 1980s because of reduced oil production from aging giants such as Prudhoe Bay. The Wilderness Society, a land conservation nonprofit, said this is the first time all unleased, available tracts in the reserve have been offered at once. The BLM announcement came one day after the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced a lease sale for all available offshore tracts in the Gulf of Mexico.

**FEDERAL REGISTER LISTINGS:**

Notices submitted to the Federal Register for Monday, October 23rd:

REG0007514 BIA Tribal Transportation Program; Delay of Compliance Date -- This BIA Interim Final Rule (IFR) updates the Tribal Transportation Program regulations to delay for two years the deadline for Tribes to comply with requirements to collect data on proposed roads for the National Tribal Transportation Facility Inventory (NTTFI). This rule will take effect upon publication in the Federal Register, but the BIA will accept public comments for 30 days. Interim Final Rule 10/25/2017

REG0007553 BLM 2017 Second National Call for Nominations for BLM Resource Advisory Councils -- The purpose of this notice is to request a second call for public nominations for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Resource Advisory Councils (RAC) that have members whose terms are scheduled to expire or have expired. Notice 10/25/2017

REG0007459 FWS Removing Hidden Lake Bluecurls from the List of Endangered and Threatened Plants; Reopening of Comment Period -- FWS is announcing a reopening of the comment period for the proposed rule to remove the plant Hidden Lake bluecurls from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Plants on the basis of recovery. Notice 10/25/2017

Lori K. Mashburn  
 White House Liaison  
 Department of the Interior  
 202.208.1694

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR DAILY UPDATE FOR CABINET AFFAIRS – 10/26/17**

Lori Mashburn, White House Liaison  
Natalie Davis, Special Assistant to the Secretary

**STATUS OF THE SECRETARY**

TODAY:

10/26 DC – Meeting with Danish Minister for Energy, Utilities, and Climate, Mr. Lars Christian

- Meeting with Chairman Lamar Smith (TX)
- Remarks at American Heroes Roundtable with Hunting and Fishing Access for Veterans
- Meeting at White House on Opioids
- Meeting with Tom Hutchison

10/27 DC – Call with Governor Mary Fallin (OK)

- Meeting with the President
- Meeting with Administrator Neomi Rao

**STATUS OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY**

TODAY: The Deputy Secretary is in DC conducting internal meetings

**OF NOTE**

**BLM RESCINDS OBAMA GHG GUIDANCE FOR ENERGY PROJECTS:** The Interior's Bureau of Land Management today officially rescinded its Obama-era instructions to consider climate change and greenhouse gas emissions before approving energy projects. In a [memorandum](#) posted today, BLM Acting Director Mike Nedd said the agency "will no longer apply the provisions" BLM issued in the last days of the Obama administration that would have made the agency weigh the potential for increasing greenhouse gas emissions in National Environmental Policy Act reviews of energy development and production projects. President Donald Trump in March [revoked](#) the Obama administration's Council on Environmental Quality's guidance that directed agencies to consider emissions and climate change in all NEPA reviews.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR RELEASES ENERGY BURDENS REPORT**

*Outlines Trump Administration's bold approach to achieving American energy dominance*

**WASHINGTON** – Today, the U.S. Department of the Interior released the "[Review of the Department of the Interior Actions that Potentially Burden Domestic Energy](#)" report which was produced in response to Executive Order 13783. The report identified agency actions that potentially burden the development or use of domestically produced energy resources, with particular attention to oil, natural gas, coal, and nuclear energy resources. Interior oversees America's oil, gas, coal, hydropower, and renewable energy resources produced on federal lands and waters, which account for almost one-fifth of the Nation's energy and generate on average \$10 billion per year in annual revenue. Today, Secretary Zinke also signed [Secretarial Order 3358](#), that will establish the Executive Committee for Expedited Permitting.

"Developing our energy resources to grow our economy and protecting the environment are not mutually exclusive. However, while conducting the review outlined in the Executive Order, we found that several costly and burdensome regulations from the past threaten that balance by hampering the production or transmission of our domestic energy," **said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke**. "Our public lands are meant to be managed for the benefit of the people. That means a multiple-use approach where appropriate and making sure that multiple-use includes energy development under

reasonable regulations. Following President Trump's leadership, Interior is fostering domestic energy production by streamlining permitting and revising and repealing Obama-era job killing regulations – all while doing so in an environmentally responsible way."

"The federal government can and must be a better business partner," **Vincent DeVito, Counselor to the Secretary for Energy Policy, said.** "Secretary Zinke's bold approach to achieving American energy dominance is making our nation freer, more secure, and more prosperous. Regulations should not unnecessarily burden energy production, but that is what occurs in many cases. The recent actions outlined in this energy report show how Interior is rolling back some of these burdensome regulations that add little or no value, while promoting responsible energy development."

The report identified a number of burdens that specifically impede the production and transportation of energy resources, including, but not limited to:

- **Obama-Era 5-Year Program** Under the last Administration, 94% of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) was put off-limits from leasing, having an adverse effect on jobs and energy dominance, while drastically reducing access to future revenue.
  - Trump Administration Action: [Secretarial Order 3350, America-First Offshore Energy Strategy](#) started the process of developing a new 5-Year Program to responsibly develop the OCS and generate much-needed revenue.
- **Federal Coal Leasing Moratorium (Secretarial Order 3338, Discretionary Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement to Modernize the Federal Coal Program)** Nearly 40% of our nation's coal comes from public lands. The 2016 coal moratorium undermines American energy security, inhibits job creation, and reduces revenues to state and local governments.
  - Action: [Secretarial Order 3348, Concerning the Federal Coal Moratorium](#) repealed the Obama-era moratorium on new federal coal leases.
- **Hydraulic Fracturing on Federal and Indian Lands Rule** The compliance costs of the existing 2015 rule on hydraulic fracturing are not justified. All 32 states with federal oil and gas leases and some tribes currently have laws or regulations that address hydraulic fracturing operations.
  - Action: [Secretarial Order 3349: American Energy Independence](#) put the rule under review. The BLM published a rulemaking to rescind the rule on July 25th.
- **Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation AKA the Venting and Flaring Rule** The rule imposes a substantial burden on industry, especially for marginal well production in energy-rich states like New Mexico, particularly the requirements that are set to become effective on January 17, 2018.
  - Action: [Secretarial Order 3349: American Energy Independence](#) put the rules under review for subsequent action by the Department. On October 5, 2017, the BLM issued a proposed rule to temporarily suspend certain requirements of the rule. The BLM is also actively reviewing the underlying regulation for potential revision.
- **Unnecessarily lengthy NEPA reviews delay projects** The NEPA process has added extra time and analysis to project completion, which adds to uncertainty for industry and higher costs for taxpayers. This is particularly true for Departmental actions that impact energy and infrastructure projects, such as resource management planning, permitting, and issuance of rights-of-way for pipeline projects and electricity transmission.

- Actions: The Department has identified a number of rules and regulations to revise or rescind such as the Master Leasing Plans, the NEPA Compliance for Oil and Gas Lease Reinstatement Petitions, and the Sage-Grouse Resource Management Plans. In addition, the Deputy Secretary issued an August memo setting a deadline of one year and limiting EIS statements to 150 pages or 300 pages for unusually complex projects.
- **Holding energy producers hostage via Compensatory Mitigation (Secretarial Order 3330)** Current compensatory mitigation policies have reduced predictability, created conflicts, and unnecessarily increased permitting/authorization timelines. Additionally, industry stakeholders believe the mitigation planning goal exceeds statutory authority. Currently, Interior and its bureaus lack a consistent terminology and framework for mitigation.
  - Action: [Secretarial Order 3349: American Energy Independence](#) reexamined the use of mitigation policies and practices in order to better balance conservation strategies and job creation. Bureaus at the Interior will review various handbooks and manuals on the use of mitigation for energy and infrastructure projects.
- **Systematic delays in the leasing program and permitting process** The long period from when acreage is first nominated to when those acres are offered at a lease sale, as well as delays between the lease sale date and when leases are awarded reduces industry certainty and hinders states from receiving their share of lease sale revenues. These delays have rendered industry less able to plan for and execute exploration and production strategies in a timely fashion, and less able to respond effectively to changing market conditions.
  - Action: [Secretarial Order 3354 Supporting and Improving the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Program and Federal Solid Mineral Leasing Program](#). Secretarial Order 3358 to form a permit expediting committee. In January 2017 there were 92 vacancies in key positions related to the permitting process. Since that time this administration has filled nearly half of those positions. The BLM is also modernizing the software used to track and coordinate permitting while seeking to add regional teams that will be able to greatly streamline the permitting process. So far this year the BLM has decreased their processing time for APDs by an average of 46 days.
- **Endangered Species Act** The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is taken into consideration for both on- and offshore energy and infrastructure projects. It has far-reaching negative impacts on energy production and transmission as well as on critical infrastructure projects. ESA abuses have led to increased costs and delays on projects.
  - Action: [Secretarial Order 3353: Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States](#) Work with the Western Governors Association and other local partners to develop recommendations to improve the application of the ESA. Launch a review of ESA regulations and policy documents regarding outdated, unnecessary, ineffective, and inconsistently aligned with Executive and Secretarial Orders.

The report also detailed extensive action taken to advance American Energy Dominance at the Department of the Interior, including, but not limited to:

- [Secretarial Order 3351: Strengthening the Department of the Interior's Energy Portfolio](#)
- [Secretarial Order 3352: National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska](#)
- [Secretarial Order 3353: Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation and Cooperation with Western States](#)
- Reestablishing the Royalty Policy Committee to ensure the public continues to receive the full value of energy produced on federal lands.

- Review, repeal, and rewriting of the following rules: the BSEE Well Control and BOP Rules, the ONRR Valuation Rule, and the OSMRE Stream Protection Rule.

### **ZINKE CHEERS PRESIDENT TRUMP'S NOMINATION OF STEVEN GARDNER FOR INTERIOR POST**

**WASHINGTON** – Today, President Donald J. Trump announced the nomination of Steven Gardner to be the Director of the office of Surface Mining, Reclamation & Enforcement (OSMRE) at the U.S. Department of the Interior. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke hailed Gardner's nomination.

"When confirmed, Steve will be an unbelievable asset to coal country and the entire team at the Department of the Interior," **said Secretary Ryan Zinke**. "Steve is highly regarded in the mining industry for his extensive experience and insight. Steve will help Interior take the proper steps forward to ensure American Energy dominance is achieved, while also being a responsible steward of American lands. We very much look forward to a quick confirmation process."

"I am beyond humbled and honored to be nominated by President Trump for the Director of OSMRE," **said Steven Gardner**. "My whole life, I have been involved with mining on multiple levels, and I understand the importance of these issues to the communities we serve. I pledge to work every day on behalf of the men and women across this country who look to the OSMRE office as a partner in bettering life for all people on mining lands."

Steve Gardner is currently serving as the President and CEO of ECSI, LLC, a consulting practice where he focused on natural resources, mining, reclamation, energy, environmental, health and safety issues. As a Licensed Professional Engineer, Gardner has worked on projects throughout the US and internationally. Gardner was the 2015 President of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration (SME) and is recognized as a Distinguished Member.

"I applaud President Donald Trump for picking Steve Gardner of Kentucky to lead the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE)," **said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell**. "Steve will be a strong leader and I look forward to the U.S. Senate considering his nomination."

"Having Kentuckian Steve Gardner lead the Office of Surface Mining will be a welcome relief to Kentucky and the nation," **said Senator Rand Paul**. "The last administration's OSM ignored science and economics when it worked to put an end to Kentucky coal mining with an overreaching rule on waterways near coal mines. With Mr. Gardner's background in mining, I am confident that this administration's OSM will ease up eight years of executive overreach and finally allow Kentucky coal to compete again in our nation's all of the above energy policy."

"I applaud the Trump Administration for selecting J. Steven Gardner of Lexington, Kentucky as the Director of the U.S. Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement," **said Congressman Andy Barr**. "I have known Steve for many years and I was proud to recommend him for this important nomination. As a well-respected leader in the mining industry with vast experience and knowledge, I am confident Steve will make an outstanding Director of OSM."

"America's mining industry welcomes Steve Gardner's nomination to become the next director of OSMRE," **said Hal Quinn, the CEO of the National Mining Association**. "A Kentucky native, Mr. Gardner has had a distinguished career as CEO of a prominent mining engineering firm with 40 years' experience in mining, engineering, reclamation, environmental, health and safety matters. He is held in high regard by his professional peers having been elected President of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration (SME), a professional society with over 13,000 members in 100 countries representing scientists, engineers and professionals serving the minerals and mining industries."

Greg Conrad, Executive Director of the Interstate Mining Compact Commission, also expressed his personal support for Steve Gardner noting his outstanding credentials and his knowledge of the intricacies of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, in particular the importance of state primacy under the Act as well as the state/federal relationship envisioned by the Act.

Mr. Gardner has an MS in Mining Engineering with a Graduate Certification in Environmental Systems and a BS in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Kentucky. In 2011, he was inducted into the College of Engineering Hall of Distinction. He has previously served on the University of Kentucky Mining Engineering Foundation, Kentucky Geological Survey, Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering Advisory Boards, and was a member of the Kentucky Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors.

The Bureau of OSMRE is responsible for establishing a nationwide program to protect society and the environment from the adverse effects of surface coal mining operations, under which OSMRE is charged with balancing the nation's need for continued domestic coal production with protection of the environment. Although a small bureau, OSMRE has achieved big results by working closely with those closest to the problem: the States, Tribes, local groups, the coal industry and communities.

**WH COMMS REPORT** (submitted Wednesday, 10/25)

**Press Inquiries:**

- Small inquiries and logistical inquiries.
- **\*\*Multiple Inquiries\*\* (Whitefish Energy Company) --REQUEST--** Would someone from Secretary Zinke's office call me to discuss Whitefish Energy. Here are my questions: 1) Did Sec. Zinke play any role in securing the contract for Whitefish Energy to work in Puerto Rico? 2) Does Sec. Zinke know the company's chief executive, Andy Techmanski? 3) The Washington Post reported that one of Sec. Zinke's sons once worked a summer job at one of the company's construction sites. Is that correct? Also, confirming this statement provided to the Post: "The Secretary always politely listens when citizens and the small business community approach him with concerns and ideas. Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company." — **RESPONSE--** On background, Neither the Secretary nor anyone in his office have taken any meetings or action on behalf of this company. The Zinkes and the Techmanskis know each other because they both live in a small town (population 6,000) where everyone knows everyone and his son joined a friend who worked a summer job at one of their construction sites.
- **\*\*Multiple Inquiries\*\* (Strategic Plan leak) —REQUEST--** I noticed today that a [link](#) to a Jan. 12 memo directing BLM's consideration of greenhouse gas emissions and the effects of climate change in NEPA reviews is now broken. Is this a temporary or permanent removal? It is a relocation of the memo? Any information you can offer would be greatly appreciated. Is BLM moving closer to announcing the changes it has in store for planning and NEPA procedures? —**RESPONSE—** The administration does not comment on leaked memos.
- **\*\*Multiple Inquiries\*\*:** —**REQUEST--** Following up on the AP story saying admin does not support delta tunnels in California. Would love to confirm and talk with someone? —**RESPONSE--** "While the Department of the Interior shares the goals of the state of California to deliver water with more certainty, eliminating risks to the California water supply, and improving the environment, at this time, the Department under the current state proposal does not expect to participate in the construction or funding of the CA Water Fix. The Department and Reclamation will continue to work with the state and stakeholders as the project is further developed."
- **Politico: (Esther Whieldon) —REQUEST--** What topic(s) are Zinke and Trump meeting on this Friday? And any sense of timing on a final WH decision/announcement on monuments? Is there anything you can tell us on what the meeting is about so we can give some insight in our morning

newsletter?—**RESPONSE**—The Department doesn't discuss meetings that may or may not be held with the President of the United States.

#### **Top Stories**

- **Washington Examiner:** [Sierra Club begins stirring up trouble for Ryan Zinke over Whitefish's Puerto Rico power contract](#)
- **CNN:** [You may have to pay \\$70 to visit the Grand Canyon and 16 other national parks](#)
- **Salt Lake Tribune:** [Majority of Utahns favors trimming Bears Ears, but most oppose breaking up Grand Staircase, poll says](#)
- **E&E News:** [Email release aims to thwart sage grouse collusion claims](#)
- **Denver Post:** [Lawmakers seek probe of \\$300 million power contract awarded to small company based in Zinke's hometown](#)
- **THE HILL-Opinion:** [Western voices are ignored in Zinke's Interior Department](#)

#### **Top Issues and Accomplishments**

- Interior continues to support all Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Maria, and Hurricane Nate efforts. All bureaus are executing their emergency plans and assisting in Hurricane relief.
- Today, Interior announced our Energy Burdens Report on regulation roll-back. The press release can be seen [HERE](#).
- Today, Interior and the Bureau of Land Management announced an oil and gas lease sale in Alaska at the National Petroleum Reserve. The release can be seen [HERE](#).
- Tomorrow, Interior will host a “Hunting and Fishing Access for Veterans” Round Table Meeting to improve coordination with and services for veterans. The event will be covered by press.
- Friday, the Secretary will meet with POTUS.
- Next week, Secretary Zinke is out on personal leave.

#### **AGENCY MEDIA (UPDATED)**

##### **WEEK AHEAD October 18 thru October 26, 2017 (Submitted 10/18)**

#### **U.S. Department of the Interior**

##### ***Secretarial-level Announcements/Events/Interviews***

- Secretary Zine will be on personal leave next week (Oct. 31-Nov. 3).
- The Secretary will be meeting with Danish Minister for Energy, Utilities, and Climate, Mr. Lars Christian. Possible MOU signing. Media TBD.
- Secretary Zinke will participate in a Roundtable focused on Veterans' Access to public lands. Selected press invited.
- Friday, Secretary Zinke has a call with Governor Mary Fallin (OK).
- Friday, Secretary Zinke is meeting with the President. Closed press.
- Next week we plan to announce 2 new FACA boards, one related to sportsmen and one related to public/private partnerships.

#### **Interior Social Media Updates**

- **October 27: Department-level video:** DOI will release a video celebrating President Theodore Roosevelt's birthday and his conservation legacy.
- **November 1: Department-level blog post:** DOI will publish a blog post for Native American Heritage Month and highlighting the Department's work.

### **National Park Service**

- **October 26: Local NPS Release:** NPS will announce the new superintendent of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
- **October 26: Local NPS Release:** Zion National Park plans to release a Finding of No Significant Impact for a project to manage desert bighorn sheep (DBHS) within the park. Zion has been partnering with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources throughout the process, and will continue to do so during implementation.
- **October 30: Local NPS Release:** Rock Creek Park will close the Old Stone House in Georgetown for approximately 1 year for fire suppression and rehabilitation work. The house and bookstore will remain open through Sunday October 29 with modified hours. Historic furniture and items have been removed from the house in preparation for the rehabilitation project.
- **October 31: Local NPS Release:** Glacier National Park will notify the public of the availability of the park's Lake McDonald Properties Management Plan Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA will be available for a 30-day public review and comment period. Following the public review and comment period, the park will prepare a formal decision document. The EA analyzes alternatives to manage NPS-owned properties surrounding Lake McDonald, which includes buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **November 2: Local NPS Release:** A ceremonial groundbreaking is scheduled for the Eisenhower Memorial, which will be administered by National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA). Final approvals have been granted by the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts. NAMA anticipates issuing a construction permit in late October, with completion tentatively scheduled for May 2020.
- **November TBD: National NPS Release:** Major announcement regarding Arlington Memorial Bridge.

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

- **October 26 (tent.): National FWS Release:** FWS will issue a news release regarding the opening of the public comment period for the Mitigation Policy and Endangered Species Act Compensatory Mitigation Policy. The portions FWS will request comment on include the policies' reference to a mitigation planning goal of net conservation gain and the policies' references to the previous Administration's mitigation directives.
- **October 26 (tent.): National FWS Release:** FWS will issue a release on the opening of the public comment for both the Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA) policy and the corresponding regulations. These notices will solicit public comments on the 2016 revised policy and regulations to determine if there are additional revisions, particularly to the CCAA standard, that will make the policy and regulations easier to implement for those entities choosing to participate in a CCAA.
- **October TBD: National FWS Release:** FWS will announce the 2017-18 Refuge-Specific Hunting and Sport Fishing Regulations. Final rule will open various national wildlife refuges to hunting and/or sport fishing for the first time (new hunts) and expand hunting and fishing opportunities at others.
- **October TBD: FWS News Bulletin:** FWS will issue a news bulletin regarding a NEPA Environmental Assessment related to lethal take permits for cormorants for aquaculture facilities.

### **Bureau of Land Management**

- **October 25 (tent.): Local BLM Release:** BLM-NV will announce the results of a competitive geothermal lease sale for 20 parcels, located in the Battle Mountain, Carson City, Elko and Winnemucca districts, containing 38,208.46 acres for geothermal leasing. This will be the first online geothermal lease sale for Nevada.
- **October 26: Local BLM Release:** BLM-AK will announce that an oil and gas lease sale will take place in December for 900 tracts covering 10.3 million acres in the NPR-A. This lease sale, the 13th since 1999, will be the first NPR-A oil and gas lease sale to occur via livestream video. This is the first time that all available tracts will be offered for lease.
- **October 26:** BLM-AK Acting State Director Karen Mouritsen will attend the Alaska Mapping Executive Committee meeting at the U.S. Geological Survey Alaska Science Center, in Anchorage.
- **October 26:** BLM-WY Cody Field Office will host a public meeting in Shell, Wyoming, in support of the 45-day scoping period for the Leavitt Reservoir Expansion Project Environmental Impact Statement.
- **October 26:** BLM-WY Casper Field Office will hold a public meeting about tribal consultation for oil and gas permits in Converse County, Wyoming.
- **October 27 (tent.): National BLM Release:** BLM will issue a release announcing that Sabinoso Wilderness Area is now open to the public.
- **November 1–2:** BLM-MT will host a tribal consultation meeting at the Montana/Dakotas State Office in Billings to discuss tribal issues and matters of interest related to the Denbury Resources, Inc. CO2 Pipeline and Enhanced Recovery Project (in southeast Montana); the BNI Coal Ltd. expansion proposal, "BNI-2" (in western North Dakota); and various fire fuels reduction projects in eastern Montana. Tribal Council Presidents/Chairs and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers from 17 tribes have been invited to the meeting.
- **November 2:** Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval will dedicate a section of Highway 140 in memory of BLM firefighters Will Hawkins and Jacob O'Malley, who were killed in a vehicle accident.
- **November 2 – 16:** Scoping meetings for the Notice of Intent to amend Greater sage-grouse land use plans will be held in the following Western cities and towns:
  - Nov. 2: Twin Falls, ID
  - Nov. 6: Cheyenne, WY; Idaho Falls, ID
  - Nov. 7: Marsing, ID; Reno, NV; Burns, OR
  - Nov. 8: Pinedale, WY; Elko, NV; Billings, MT, Craig, CO
  - Nov. 9: Ely, NV
  - Nov. 14: Vernal, UT
  - Nov. 15: Cedar City, UT
  - Nov. 16: Salt Lake City, UT
- **November TBD: Local BLM Release:** BLM-CO expects to issue a decision about whether to grant a royalty rate reduction for the West Elk Mine. The BLM proposes to approve Mountain Coal Company, LLC's application for a royalty rate reduction from 8 percent to 5 percent for 10.3 million tons of coal in the West Elk Mine in southwest Colorado's North Fork Valley.
- **November TBD: Local BLM Release:** BLM-CO expects to issue a decision whether to modify GCC Energy's King II Mine in Montezuma County in southwest CO by 951 acres to allow GCC to access an estimated 4.66 million tons of recoverable Federal coal reserves for an additional 6.5 years of mining.

### **U.S. Geological Survey**

- **October 30 (tent.): Local USGS Release:** USGS will issue a release regarding a new USGS study that tracks millions of tons of rocks, gravel and silt carried by the Sauk River and its tributaries to the Skagit River.

### **Bureau of Reclamation**

- **October 26 - November 1:** A six-member team from the Bureau of Reclamation will visit Taipei, Taiwan, to participate in the 30th anniversary meeting between Reclamation and Taiwan's Water Resources Agency. Reclamation serves as the designated technical representative of the American Institute in Taiwan, the official arm of the U.S. Department of State in Taiwan.
- **October 30:** Status Hearing on Columbia River System Operations EIS (OR). In Portland, Oregon, Federal District Court Judge Michael Simon will receive updates to the status report as part of ongoing litigation. The status conference hearing is scheduled for November 28. Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have four remaining years to complete the court-ordered EIS.

### **Bureau of Ocean Energy Management:**

- **October/November TBD: BOEM Note to Stakeholders:** BOEM issue a note to stakeholders regarding Q3 FY17 study reports posting to ESPIS.
- **Nov TBD: BOEM Note to Stakeholders:** BOEM will issue a note to stakeholders on the path forward for future renewable energy leasing offshore the Atlantic Coast Request for Feedback (RFF).

### **Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement**

- **October 27:** BSEE will issue a readout of Director Angelle's engagements in the Gulf of Mexico.

### **Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement**

- **October 30: National OSMRE Release:** OSMRE will announce the winners of its 2017 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards. The awards are presented in partnership with the National Mining Association and will be formally presented on Nov. 6, 2017 in Wash, D.C.

### **POLITICAL APPOINTEE UPDATE**

DOI politicals on board 61

3 PAS confirmed as of 9/18.

5 nominated awaiting confirmation:

- Pending Senate floor vote: Susan Combs, Assistant Secretary Policy Management and Budget.
- Pending Senate floor vote: Brenda Berman, Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation.
- Pending Senate floor vote: Joe Balash, Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals
- Pending Senate floor vote: Ryan Douglas Nelson, Solicitor
- Pending Hearing: Tara Sweeney, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs

Overall:

- Schedule C: 34 of 68 onboard; 2 starting; 6 in process
- NC-SES: 24 of 44 onboard; 4 starting; 1 in process
- PAS: 3 Confirmed; 5 Announced; 14 of 17 Submitted to PPO

### **SECRETARY SPEAKING INVITATIONS (Updates in Bold)**

Accepted:

**10/26- Hunting and Fishing Access for Veterans Roundtable (DC)**  
**11/6 - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Board of Directors Reception (DC)**  
**11/7 - DOI Veterans Day Ceremony (DC)**  
**11/8 – National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Board of Directors Meeting (DC)**  
**11/9 – National WWI Memorial at Pershing Park (DC)**  
**11/10 – Tour of Manassas National Battlefield Park**  
**11/11 - Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (DC)**  
**11/11 - 64th Annual Veterans Day National Ceremony (DC)**  
**11/ 11 - Veterans Day Observance at World War II Memorial (DC)**

Open (date TBC)- Americans for Tax Reform (DC)  
 Open (date TBC)- Detroit Economic Club  
 Event Postponed by organizers due to fire - 10/21 – DEPA BOD Meeting (CA)

Outstanding Invitations in Process:

**10/28 Remarks at Washington International Horse Show DC)**  
**10/29 Friends of Theodore Roosevelt Island (DC)**  
**11/15 Motorcycle Industry Council Symposium (Carson, CA)**  
**12/1-2 – Western Governors Association Annual Meeting (Phoenix, AZ)**  
**12/9 – Western Caucus Foundation Winter Policy Meeting (Las Vegas, NV)**

Declining

10/17 – Folsom Dam Joint Federal Project Completion Ceremony (Folsom, CA)  
 10/17 – National Association of Sporting Goods Wholesalers (San Antonio, TX)  
 10/18 - Environmental Law Institute (ELI) 2017 Award Dinner (DC)  
 10/19 – USO Gala (Washington, DC)  
 10/19 – Grand Junction Petroleum and Mining Club (Grand Junction, CO)  
 10/20 - TXOGA Lone Star Energy Forum (Woodlands, TX)  
 10/26 - Montana Chamber Annual Meeting (Great Falls, MT)  
 10/28 – Cattle Producers of Washington Annual Meeting (Airway Heights, WA)  
 10/30-11/3 – International Mining and Resources Conference (Melbourne, Australia)  
**10/30 – Interstate Mining Compact Commission Mid-Year Meeting (DC)**  
 10/31 - George B. Hartzog, Jr. Awards and Speaker Program Clemson University (SC)  
 11/1 - 2017 SHIFT (Shaping How we Invest For Tomorrow) Festival (Jackson Hole, WY)  
 11/4 Governor Reynolds Annual Pheasant Hunt  
 11/8 – WY Governor Annual Business Forum (Cheyenne, WY)  
 11/7-9 National Ranger Council Annual Meeting (Gettysburg, PA)  
 11/9 - America First Energy Conference hosted by Heartland Institute (Houston, TX)  
 11/9 - Bass Fishing Hall of Fame Induction Dinner at the Wonders of Wildlife (Springfield, MO)  
**11/13 Montana Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting (Billings, MT)**  
 11/14 – George Rogers Clark National Historical Park Quarter Launch (Vincennes, Indiana)  
**11/29 Association of California Water Agencies 2017 Fall Conference and Exhibition (Anaheim, CA)**  
**12/5-7 America Outdoors Association's 29th Annual Marketing and Management Conference for Outfitters and Adventure Resorts (Reno, NV)**  
**12/6 American Exploration and Mining Association Annual Meeting (Reno, NV)**  
**12/8 - Valley Industry and Commerce Association Annual Meeting (Los Angeles, CA)**

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (new)**

**Port Aransas, Texas Fatal Barge Fire and Oil Spill:**

Response operations continue in Port Aransas, Texas, following the fatal barge explosion and oil discharge. As of October 24, there has been no additional release of oil. The barge was transported through the channel and into a mooring location yesterday, which will ensure safe offload of remaining product contained in the cargo tanks. OPEC reports that multiple shorebirds have been observed with light to moderate oiling; however, none of the birds have been exposed to the amount of oil that would require recovery and rehabilitation. Wildlife crews are continuing to monitor the situation.

Beach assessment and cleanup operations were ongoing yesterday at Padre Island National Seashore, where two teams of 40 personnel removed 14 cubic yards of oily solids.

**Hurricane Response/Recovery:**

The Department of Homeland Security reports that, in Puerto Rico, power has been restored to approximately 25 (+1)-percent of customers and the expectation is that 95-percent of Puerto Rico will be restored by December 15. Potable water has been restored to more than 74 (+1)-percent of clients served by the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority. Telecommunications officials estimate 87 (no change)-percent of the population lives in areas where wireless voice and text service has been restored. Water levels at the Guajactaca Dam are seven feet below the spillway and evacuations will be lifted when the water drops another seven feet. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, grid power has been restored for 30 (no change)-percent of the population on St. Thomas, 2.9 (no change)-percent on St. Croix, and efforts on St. John are expected to begin in two to three weeks. The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority estimates 90-percent of the power will be restored by November 23. In total, there are over 20,000 federal personnel that are directly supporting recovery operations in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**OUTSIDE MEDIA OF INTEREST (new)**

**U.S. Offers Record Lease Sale In Alaska Reserve To Oil, Gas Drillers.**

Reuters (10/25, Gardner) reports the Interior Department is planning to hold a lease sale on December 6 for 900 tracts in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. The Alaska Dispatch News (10/25, DeMarban) reports the tracts contain 10.3 million acres, about half of the total reserve. The BLM said the size of the offering is the largest ever. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said, "(The) unprecedented sale in Alaska will help achieve our goal of American energy dominance."

**No Mention Of Climate Change In Interior's Draft Strategic Plan.**

The Hill (10/25, Cama) reports a "draft version" of the five-year strategic plan for the Interior Department "does not mention anything about climate change, including whether the agency plans to fight it or how it will adapt." The draft "focuses heavily on plans to produce more fossil fuels and other forms of energy on public lands and the nation's outer continental shelf."

**Nancy Pelosi Demands Probe Into Montana Firm's 'Highly Suspect' Contract To Repair Puerto Rico.**

The Washington Examiner (10/25, Siegel) reports House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi yesterday "demanded an investigation into how a small Montana-based firm with ties to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke struck a \$300 million deal to repair Puerto Rico's shattered electricity grid." Whitefish Energy agreed to a \$300 million contract with PREPA "to rebuild 100 miles of power infrastructure across the island." In a statement Pelosi said, "All Americans should be concerned about the highly suspect Whitefish contract and the circumstances under which it was negotiated. ... Democrats demand Congress and the appropriate Inspectors General exercise their oversight role to get to the bottom of

this suspicious agreement and hold this administration accountable for its dangerous lack of transparency in spending taxpayer money." The [Washington Examiner](#)(10/25, Siciliano) reports the Sierra Club also is "calling for probes of the contract in both the Senate and the House."

**New Attitude, New Hope For Struggling Energy Industry.**

The [Lafayette \(LA\) Daily Advertiser](#) (10/25, Stickney) reports that Randal Luthi, president of the National Ocean Industries Association, "told a 2017 Louisiana Gulf Coast Oil and Gas Exposition audience Wednesday that the Trump administration has made important appointments and taken decisive, needed steps to reverse the perceived bias in Washington against fossil fuels." According to Luthi, "Trump appointments like Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Bureau of Safety and Environment Enforcement Director Scott Angelle of Breaux Bridge, who spoke to LAGCOE on Tuesday, are working with the energy industry, not fighting it." He said, "Personnel is policy."

**Power Restoration Moves Forward In US Virgin Islands.**

[Caribbean News Now!](#) (10/24) reports that "about a third of the power on the island of St Thomas has been restored, US Virgin Islands Governor Kenneth Mapp said on Monday." Mapp told reporters "that the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) reports that St Thomas had 32 percent of its power restored while 15 percent of electricity has been restored in St Croix." Mapp "expects Cruz Bay, St John to be energized by Wednesday, which will bring power restoration on that island up to 25 percent."

**Alaska Dispatch News: For the first time, all available tracts in Alaska's National Petroleum Reserve are up for lease**

The Trump administration said Wednesday that it is offering a record 900 tracts for an upcoming lease sale within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, a region that has attracted renewed interest from the oil industry and geologists. At 10.3 million acres, the tracts being offered for the lease sale in December represent about half of the 22.8-million-acre reserve. The Bureau of Land Management said Wednesday the number of tracts to be auctioned for lease is the largest ever. "(The) unprecedented sale in Alaska will help achieve our goal of American energy dominance," said U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, adding that he had pledged to help fill the trans-Alaska pipeline during a visit to see the line and Alaska fields in May. The 800-mile pipeline connecting North Slope fields with a southern Alaska port moves more than 500,000 barrels daily, about one-fourth of the peak shipped in the late 1980s because of reduced oil production from aging giants such as Prudhoe Bay. The Wilderness Society, a land conservation nonprofit, said this is the first time all unleased, available tracts in the reserve have been offered at once. The BLM announcement came one day after the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced a lease sale for all available offshore tracts in the Gulf of Mexico.

**FEDERAL REGISTER LISTINGS:**

Notices submitted to the Federal Register for Monday, October 23rd:

REG0007514 BIA Tribal Transportation Program; Delay of Compliance Date -- This BIA Interim Final Rule (IFR) updates the Tribal Transportation Program regulations to delay for two years the deadline for Tribes to comply with requirements to collect data on proposed roads for the National Tribal Transportation Facility Inventory (NTTFI). This rule will take effect upon publication in the Federal Register, but the BIA will accept public comments for 30 days. Interim Final Rule 10/25/2017

REG0007553 BLM 2017 Second National Call for Nominations for BLM Resource Advisory Councils -- The purpose of this notice is to request a second call for public nominations for the Bureau of Land

Management (BLM) Resource Advisory Councils (RAC) that have members whose terms are scheduled to expire or have expired. Notice 10/25/2017

REG0007459 FWS Removing Hidden Lake Bluecurls from the List of Endangered and Threatened Plants; Reopening of Comment Period -- FWS is announcing a reopening of the comment period for the proposed rule to remove the plant Hidden Lake bluecurls from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Plants on the basis of recovery. Notice 10/25/2017